

contents of the waste-paper basket and every conceivable sort of dirt, including filth-encrusted rags, animals' bones, and leavings of a far more unsavoury kind. The all-pervading smell of ammonia brought home the fact that each of these little rooms, after its use had become impossible even for dirt-hardened Tibetan soldiers, must also have served them during longer or shorter periods as a latrine. The thick deposits of filth here seemed to be less interspersed with fine drift-sand than the ancient rubbish-heaps that it has been my lot to clear elsewhere within the Tārīm Basin. The partial absence of this effective desiccating and disinfecting agent may possibly have had something to do with the peculiar age-persisting 'smelliness' which I shall always associate with our operations at the Mīrān fort.

Refuse accumulated in rooms.

It would have been more difficult for me to realize the strange conditions in which such big accumulations of dirt could grow up in quarters intended for human occupation, and quite close to others still actually thus occupied, if the experience of subsequent travel had not shown me exactly the same process 'in being'. It is well illustrated by the conditions into which portions of the houses, *recte* hovels, used as inns along the Chinese high road from Kan-su to the oases of Turkestan are allowed to fall, while others immediately adjoining are still regularly frequented as shelters. In many instances the erection of new mud hovels would there be found to cost less trouble and expense than the clearing out of the rubbish-filled old ones, and the same is likely to have been the case within this Tibetan station. Far away to the west, too, I have met with sights which strikingly called up pictures of the interior of the Mīrān fort at the time when its refuse deposits were still growing. Thus in November, 1915, on my journey through easternmost Khorāsān, I found the old, tumbled-down townlet of Tabas Masīnān crowded with domed mud hovels of the usual Persian type, which were built up in tiers against the enclosing high walls. The later and still tenanted quarters could only be reached by climbing over the roofs of others which prolonged occupation had completely choked with refuse and rendered uninhabitable even for the humble cultivators now settled within the small town.

Abundance of Tibetan records.

But what invested those modest quarters within the ruined fort of Mīrān with their special antiquarian interest was not the great extent of the refuse accumulations, but the remarkable abundance in which documents, almost all Tibetan, on wood and paper were to be found among the deposits, besides small objects illustrating the daily life of the place and period. Though all the rooms which the plan, Plate 30, marks with numbers furnished documents or miscellaneous objects, the number of such finds varied greatly, and not always in proportion to the quantity of general refuse contained in each. A reference to the inventory of Tibetan documents prepared by Dr. Francke and to the Descriptive List below will fully illustrate this. By far the richest in 'finds' were the refuse layers which were cleared in the rooms i, ii, iv, vii, viii, xiv. As a glance at the plan shows, all these are to be found in the line extending closely along the east wall. In view of the obvious advantage which its shelter afforded, we may safely assume that the quarters of those to whose 'waste-paper baskets' most of the written remains must be attributed were situated on that side. About the original use of individual rooms it is impossible to assert anything more definite than that those which were found, like i, ii, iv, viii, filled with refuse to their full height (in the case of viii about eight feet and six inches) are likely to have been vacated and turned into dust-bins earlier than the rest. The fact that the rooms x-xii, and the one adjoining the last on the south, had floor levels appreciably higher than those in xiii and xiv would point to later construction. The last-named room, seen in the centre of Fig. 116, was built partly casemate-like into the thickness of the rampart where it meets the south-east bastion. Though all its upper wall had been carried off by erosion, the refuse which remained in it, to a height of six feet, was enough to yield well over 200 documents, and among them several particularly large and well preserved.